

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
other names/site number Copperhill Cemetery

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Depaul Street, Depot Street, and Main Street NA ☐ not for publication
city or town Copperhill NA ☐ vicinity
stat Tennessee code TN county Polk code 139 zip code 37317
e _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

- ☐ removed from the National
Register.

- ☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Copperhill District (boundary increase)
Name of Property

Polk County, Tennessee
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

	buildings
1	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total
0	

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of the Tennessee Copper Basin

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other Stone, Marble, Concrete, Brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☒ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: MINING

Period of Significance

1895-1941

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Name of Property

Polk County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.93 acres Mineral Bluff, GA-NC-TN 134 NE

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 739857 3875197
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Archambault
organization Southeast Tennessee Development District date February 2008
street & number 1000 Riverfront Parkway telephone (423) 424-4266
city or town Chattanooga state TN zip code 37402

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Copperhill Cemetery Preservation Committee, c/o Barbara Beavers
street & number P.O. Box 402 telephone (706) 492-3534
city or town McCaysville state GA zip code 30555

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Polk County, Tennessee

DESCRIPTION

The Copperhill Cemetery is located directly south of Depaul Street in Copperhill (2006 population 511), Polk County, Tennessee. It contains gravestones dating from circa 1895 to circa 1998 and is situated on the crest of the hill with the terrain sloping steeply downward on all sides of the site. The property contains 7.93 acres, although burials are located within a 2.5-acre portion at the crest. Located along Depaul Street and adjoining the Copperhill Historic District (NR 5/15/92) to the east, the Copperhill Cemetery overlooks the town and the Copper Basin. Heavy vegetation in the cemetery has resulted due to years of neglect, but has recently been removed by voluntary labor.

Located in the southeastern corner of Polk County, Copperhill's southern border touches the Georgia state line in McCaysville, Fannin County and its eastern border connects with Cherokee County, North Carolina. The Cherokee National Forest is located north and west of Copperhill. The Copper Basin is characterized by hilly terrain with numerous creeks and the Ocoee River. The Copperhill Cemetery is accessible on Depaul Street, which is located north of the nominated property. A gravel road circles the approximately 2.5 acre portion that contains burials. The remainder of the land is historically part of the cemetery but due to the steep decline along the perimeter of the gravel road, no burials are known to be here. Due to the effects of the copper mining industry and emissions of sulfur dioxide in the early to mid 20th century, there is a reddish brown soil and visible erosion in the cemetery. Deciduous trees line the perimeter of the cemetery serving as a barrier between the cemetery and the residential dwellings below along Main Street (south), Depot Street (west), and Hill Street (east).

There are approximately 295 known burials at the Copperhill Cemetery. The number of unmarked graves is unknown because of years of erosion and heavy vegetation down the sloping hillside beyond the gravel road. The existing markers provide a representative variety of traditional gravestones and non-traditional markers, spanning the cemetery's period of significance (1895-1941). Only a few burials occurred after 1953, with the last burial confirmed in 1998.



Woodmen of the World



Floral Design



Lamb

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The earliest of gravestones, beginning with 1895, appear to be typical hand carved limestone and marble slabs. Stones dating through the late 19th century and early 20th century reflect a variety of typical shapes and motifs of that period. Both slab stones and obelisks are common. Various symbolic motifs can be found carved on gravestones throughout the cemetery, including floral, Masonic, Woodsmen of the World, American Legion, Eastern Star, and lamb symbols.

There are numerous non-traditional markers reflecting both economic poverty and simple utilitarianism of the region. These include handmade markers of concrete, fieldstone, and brick. Many gravestones throughout the cemetery reflect upon infant and child mortality as some are adorned with lambs. In some places there are fieldstones that appear to be grave markers. Generally, the more traditional markers and prominent family lots are located on the crest of the hill and lined with concrete rectangular-shaped boxes.



**Obelisk Marker – Barclay
Family**



**McCay and Barclay Family
Plots (view southwest)**



Common Marker

The cemetery is currently undergoing cleanup and restoration with gravestones and markers discovered from time to time. Erosion and wild vegetation continue to be threats. In addition, vandalism to the gravestones is unfortunately a common occurrence due to the neglect the cemetery has received over the last quarter century. Volunteer labor has improved the appearance of the cemetery significantly over the last year. The recently established Copperhill Cemetery Preservation Committee is working with the Southeast Tennessee Development District to guide them with preservation grant funding and restoration guidelines that follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

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Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Polk County, Tennessee

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase) consists of the Copperhill Cemetery that is adjacent to the National Register listed Copperhill Historic District. The cemetery is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its relationship to the copper industry and its association with the First United Methodist Church and residential dwellings included in the Copperhill Historic District. It serves as a physical reminder of the establishment of Copperhill and the late stage of mining development in the Copper Basin. The various grave markers represent the community's growth and change from the late 19th century into the early to mid-20th century. Affiliations with mining, Masonic and other organizations, and child mortality are all represented with the styles of grave markers that are present in the cemetery.

Polk County, located in the southeastern corner of Tennessee, was established in 1839, a year after the removal of the Cherokee. The early white settlers primarily farmed in the basin, which was isolated due to the lack of adequate roads. That changed quickly in the 1850s with the discovery and mining of copper. A road between Hiwassee (Ducktown) in Polk County and Cleveland in Bradley County, known as the Copper Road, was completed in 1853 and allowed copper to be hauled by wagon along a 40-mile stretch that made its path through the Ocoee River gorge. After brief success, the mining operations were forced to close in the late 1870s because of increased transportation costs of the copper and the lack of a rail line.

Circa 1890, rail transportation arrived to the region connecting the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad with the Atlantic, Knoxville, and Northern Railroad at place known as McCays, which was named after Hebert T. McCay, an early settler in the region, merchant, and ferry operator on the Ocoee River. The mines shipped the ore to McCays so that it could be easily transported by rail to various markets.

Near the turn-of-the century, a smelter and acid plant were constructed in McCays and the Tennessee Copper Company (TCC) placed their headquarters in the town in 1904. Shortly after, McCays changed its name to Copperhill because of the product that was mined in the town and the area's terrain. As the copper industry continued to grow so did the demand for adequate housing. TCC built new housing for its workers in Ducktown (NR 5/15/92) and Copperhill. Two areas were developed in Copperhill. Smelter Hill, the area of Copperhill behind the smelter, featured large, prominent homes with decorative detailing built for the managers and officials of the Tennessee Copper Company. The neighborhood adjacent to Smelter Hill was known as Newtown (NR 5/15/92). It featured simple, stock plan homes for the smelter workers.

In 1889, the First United Methodist Church was organized in Herbert T. McCay's home. That same year he donated a 100 x 100 lot on the corner of Riverview Street and Highland Street to construct a church for the congregation. A year later the congregation worshiped at a commissary owned by Herbert's son, D.C. McCay. He later moved his store and gave the building to the First United Methodist Church to hold services. The building was also used by Polk County as a public school. In 1892-1893, a new church building was erected on the site that was donated by Herbert McCay. Unfortunately, the building burned in the Copperhill fires of 1910. A year later, a new, brick late Gothic Revival church was built on the same location and used until 1977.

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Polk County, Tennessee

Herbert T. McCay and family were great contributors to the city of Copperhill and the First United Methodist Church. Mr. H.T. McCay was the leading merchant in McCays in the late 19th century and owned most of the property in the town that would later become Copperhill in the early 1900s.¹

Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, later associated with the First United Methodist Church, purchased a 7.93-acre lot in 1873.² The scenic property was purchased with the intent of building a church and parsonage. However, no church construction ever occurred on the lot, and for over twenty years, it remained empty. The property began its function as a cemetery in 1895 when Ada Harrison, the one-and-one-half year old daughter of J.S. and M.J. Harrison, died and was buried at the cemetery.

Smelter Hill and Newtown experienced devastating fires in 1910 completely destroying all of its structures. The burned buildings included the Methodist Church, which was rebuilt at the same location in 1911. Copperhill, in 1913, became the first town in the Copper Basin to be officially incorporated as a city and experienced a second wave of residential dwellings constructed in the 1920s. Many Craftsman Bungalow and Colonial Revival domiciles were built along the steep terrain, not so much for the mine workers but for the people who were indirectly involved with copper and sulfuric acid industry. Teachers, doctors, and store owners found their niche in a community that was evolving. The booming town included approximately 50 stores in the mid-1920s.

The Copperhill Cemetery was primarily used from 1895-1941 and includes approximately 295 known burials. Families/individuals associated with the First United Methodist Church and community members involved with the copper and sulfuric acid industry, either directly or indirectly, were buried at this site. The grave markers vary from elaborate obelisk headstones to fieldstones representing the diverse socioeconomics of Copperhill in late 19th century and early to mid-20th centuries. The more prominent families, like the McCay's, Barclays, and the Vellenoweth's, had decorative headstones and family plots lined with rectangular concrete walls on the crest of the cemetery hill. Families or individuals who were poor had their graves marked with fieldstones or bricks, which were scattered along the perimeter of the cemetery.



¹ "The Influence of Their Lives Still Lives." *Polk County News, Historical and Progress Edition*. 28 Nov 1968, p. 2A.

² The Georgia and Tennessee state line in Copperhill, TN and McCaysville, GA changed several times during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A 1910 surveying map shows the Georgia state line located 100 feet north of the present state line. An earlier 1904 map shows the Georgia state line proceeding even further north into Copperhill. The 1873 deed for the Copperhill Cemetery was discovered in the Fannin County, GA Courthouse. Before 1910, part of the Copperhill Historic District and all of the cemetery were once located in the state of Georgia.

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Polk County, Tennessee**Ada Harrison Headstone****Fieldstone Grave Marker**

Approximately 65 burials took place at the cemetery from 1904-1909. These deaths may have been directly attributed to the pollution from the copper smelting and acid plants that were constructed in the early 1900s. The harmful effects of sulfur dioxide that was produced from the roasting of copper ore resulted in two landmark pollution court cases that occurred in 1904 and 1906. The effects of these two conservation law cases led to the reduction of the copper company's emissions of noxious gases.³ Even though there was a high rate of infant mortality nationwide at the time, forty-five children under 7-years old died during this period in Copperhill. Most deaths resulted from industrial pollution or from an epidemic. Of those forty-five children, a large majority were less than 2- years old. During this same period, approximately 20 adults were buried at the cemetery including Reverend J.J. Vellenoweth (1869-1908), pastor at the First United Methodist Church and Herbert McCay (1838-1904).

The cemetery continued to be used by the First United Methodist Church regularly until 1953. Since that year, only a few burials have taken place at the Copperhill Cemetery. The decline in usage was first, related to the decline in the mining industry circa 1940, as many families began to leave once jobs became scarce. Second, the First United Methodist Church moved to a new facility in the 1970s, and third, the church ceased burials at the cemetery. The last person to be buried at the Copperhill Cemetery was Walter T. Elrod, Jr. in 1998. Over the last 30 years, the cemetery has experienced neglect, deterioration, and erosion. Many headstones have been damaged or washed away due to the erosion of the hillside.

The graves at the Copperhill Cemetery serve as silent, physical reminders of the community that once focused its religious and economic activity in the Copper Basin. At the present time, a strong resurgence of

³ Dennison, Shain and Ostby, Lloyd. "Burra Burra Mine Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination. October 1982. Note: The first case, *Madison v. Ducktown Sulphur Copper and Iron Co.* and *Madison v. Tennessee Copper Company*, involved local farmers (defendants) filing an injunction to stop the roasting process that was destroying all the vegetation in the area and threatening their livelihood. The court concurred that the roasting did cause damages to vegetation and the farmers' occupation, but denied their injunction stating that the copper industry's economic benefits outweighed the economic benefits of farming. In 1906, *Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Company*, the State of Georgia contended that the state should not be subject to the pollutants that were emitted from the copper company in Tennessee. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the defendant's injunction until the copper company completed its buildings, which ceased the emission of the noxious gas. It has not been proved whether or not the effects of the sulfur dioxide gases created health problems for the residents of Copperhill. However, it is believed that respiratory problems may have been directly correlated to the emission of these noxious gases.

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Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Polk County, Tennessee

interest in the restoration and preservation of the cemetery has led to the creation of the Copperhill Cemetery Preservation Committee. This group is aggressively making attempts to stop the tremendous erosion as well as cleaning the grounds and resetting stones. They are working with the City of Copperhill to gain ownership of the property since the First United Methodist Church claims no ties to the cemetery. Including this cemetery as a part of the Copperhill National Register Historic District will provide greater awareness of the significance of this site and the history of people buried at the cemetery.

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Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Polk County, Tennessee

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blankenship, Carl and E. Marie, and Burgess, Beverly. *Polk County, Tennessee Cemetery Listings*. Privately printed, 1992. Copy available at the Cleveland Public Library, History Branch and Archives, Cleveland, Tennessee.

Daniels, Karen. "Historic Resources of the Tennessee Copper Basin." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing. February 1992.

_____. "Copperhill Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination. August, 1992.

Dennison, Shain and Lloyd Ostby. "Burra Burra Mine Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination. October 1982.

Fannin County, Georgia Register of Deeds. Pages 419-421.

"The Influence of Their Lives Still Lives." *Polk County News, Historical and Progress Edition*. 28 Nov 1968, p. 2A.

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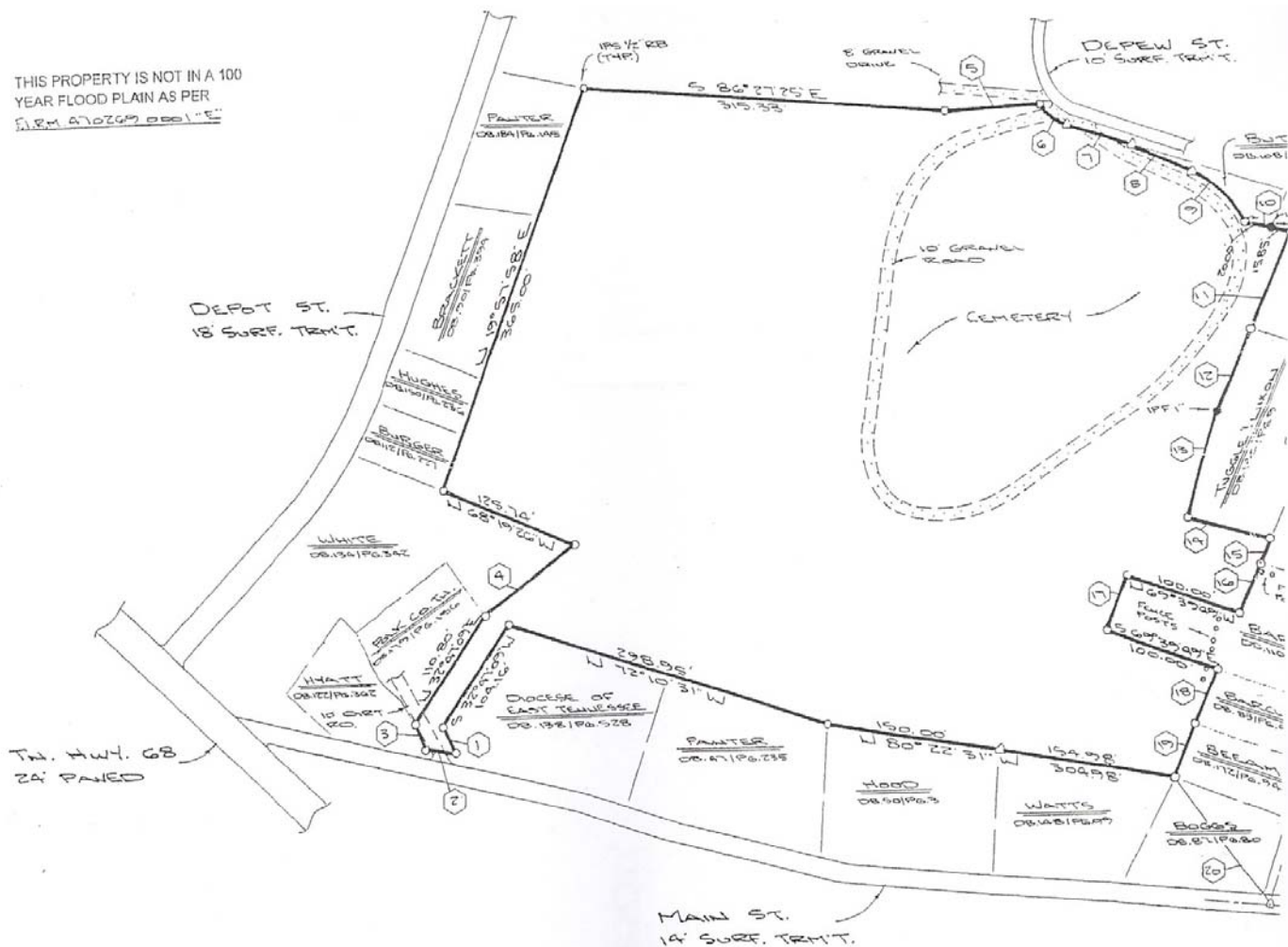
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Copperhill Historic District (boundary increase)
Polk County, Tennessee

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description and boundary justification:

The Copperhill Cemetery is located south of Depaul Street in Copperhill, Polk County, Tennessee. It is listed as Parcel 1 on Polk County tax map 136E, Group C. The nominated property includes the entire parcel. The majority of the cemetery's eastern boundary abuts the National Register listed Copperhill Historic District. The portion that does not abut the cemetery, Parcels, 3 and 13, contain houses that would be noncontributing to the district so they are excluded.

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Copperhill Historic District
Polk County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo by: Paul Archambault
Southeast Tennessee Development District
1000 Riverfront Parkway
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

Date: October 2007

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, TN 37243

Barclay Family Plot, view north
1 of 14

Barclay Family Plot, view southwest
2 of 14

Family Plots, crest of cemetery hill, view west
3 of 14

Crest of Copperhill Cemetery, view southwest
4 of 14

Crest of Copperhill Cemetery, view east
5 of 14

Woodmen of the World Marker
6 of 14

Floral Design Marker
7 of 14

McCay Family Plot, view northwest
8 of 14

Lamb markers for young children
9 of 14

Marker for a child, with lamb

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Barclay Obelisk Marker

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Ada Harrison Marker, first cemetery burial marker

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Concrete Rectangular-Shape Family Plot

13 of 14

Family Plot, south end of the Copperhill Cemetery

14 of 14